

April 4, 2025

Chief Shon F. Barnes
Seattle Police Department
PO Box 34986
Seattle, WA 98124-4986

Dear Chief Barnes:

Please see the Management Action Recommendation below.

Case Number

- 2024OPA-0350 / 2025COMP-0008

Topic

Barricaded Subjects

Summary

- It was alleged that the named employee failed to de-escalate by entering the basement of a building in which a subject was allegedly barricaded.

Analysis

- SPD Policy 8.100¹ provides officers with guidance on de-escalation tactics to reduce the need for force through emphasizing communication, time, distance, and shielding. It discusses “placing barriers” between uncooperative subjects and sworn employees but does not define when a subject is “barricaded.”
- SPD Policy 15.080² provides three criteria to determine when SWAT should be called for barricaded subjects but does not provide guidance on how to determine whether a subject is barricaded or if SWAT must be called for all situations involving barricaded subjects.
- OPA’s Investigation found that in the absence of an SPD policy that clearly defines whether a subject is barricaded, officers could have different reasonable interpretations on this issue.
- SPD’s Force Review Board recently issued an FRB Action for SPD’s policy unit to provide, “a clear definition of ‘barricaded subject’ in the SPD manual.”³
- A report from the IACP defines a barricaded individual and differentiates between barricaded subjects and suspects. It recommends agencies develop a process for assessing whether an individual is barricaded, outlining four steps of related intelligence and information gathering.⁴
- OPA reviewed policies from comparable cities.

¹ Seattle Police Department. Policy Manual. [Policy 8.100 POL \(1\) De-Escalation](#). Effective 04/24/2023, Revised 09/01/2024.

² Seattle Police Department. Policy Manual. [Policy 15.080](#). Follow-up Unit Notification & Follow-up Investigation. Revised 10/06/2022.

³ Seattle Police Department. Type II Use-of-Force Force Review Board Findings. Date: 2/4/2025.

⁴ International Association of Chiefs of Police. Law Enforcement Policy Center. [“Response to Barricaded Individuals.”](#) May 2020.



- San Francisco has a specific hostage and barricaded subject policy which defines barricaded suspect incidents with several characteristics (see GO 8.02).⁵
- Spokane defines a barricaded subject, provides specific factors to consider when preparing for a barricaded situation, and outlines supervisor responsibilities.”⁶
- Denver provides a checklist for officers to use when verifying incidents meet the definition of barricaded, including “(1) The suspect has committed or is reasonably suspected of having committed a criminal act. (2) There is a good reason to believe the suspect is armed. (3) The suspect poses a potential threat to the lives of others. (4) The suspect is secreted in a position of advantage. (5) The suspect has refused to submit to arrest or has refused to respond to attempts at contact.”⁷
- Los Angeles advises officers to call SWAT to address barricade/hostage situations, “when the suspect is probably armed; the suspect is believed to have been involved in a criminal act or is a significant threat to the lives and safety of the public and/or police; the suspect is in a position of advantage, affording cover and concealment or is contained in an open area and the presence or approach of police officers could precipitate an adverse reaction by the suspect; and, the suspect refuses to submit to arrest.”⁸

Recommendations

- SPD should develop a new policy focused on barricaded subjects. This policy should clearly define what constitutes a barricaded subject and offer officers specific guidance on how to make this determination.⁹

I appreciate your consideration and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bonnie Glenn".

Bonnie Glenn
Interim Director, Office of Police Accountability

⁵ San Francisco Police Department. [General Order 8.02](#). Hostage and Barricaded Suspect. Revised 07/06/2022.

⁶ Spokane Police Department. [Spokane Police Department Policy Manual](#). Policy 414. Hostages and Barricaded Suspects. Published 07/19/2021.

⁷ Denver Police Department. [Operational Manual](#). 115.00 Critical Incidents. Revised 10/04/2019.

⁸ Los Angeles Police Department. Office of Chief of Police. [“S.W.A.T. Special Weapons and Tactics.”](#) Retrieved 2025.

⁹ See IACP report cited above, “IV. B.4 – Intelligence and Information Gathering ...”